

1. Publishing at the OECD

This chapter provides information on the types of audiences reading OECD material, and their needs and expectations. It explains how the OECD makes its content accessible through a range of published material, good writing and clear signposting, and online break-up into individual components.

Who are our readers?

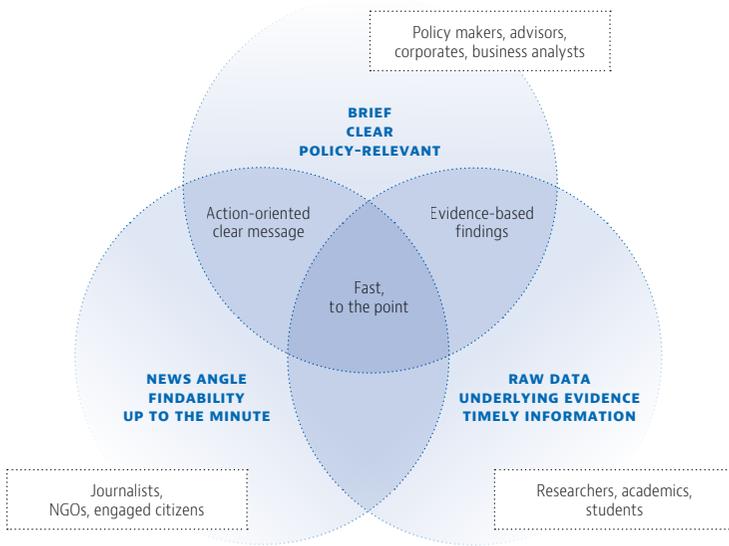
The OECD's audiences are made up of time-constrained, Internet-savvy readers who mostly access our content on line. They represent a mix of policy makers (government officials and parliamentarians) and policy shapers such as academics, researchers and students; non-governmental organisations and librarians; journalists, as well as a growing number of private-sector employees and engaged citizens.

OECD reader surveys show that most readers seek statistics accompanied by OECD analysis. They want to:

- consult country surveys, reviews and reports
- compare country statistical data
- consult statistics on a particular topic
- browse a publication on line
- consult working papers and policy papers.

Total readership on our two main online platforms, the OECD iLibrary and oecd.org, has grown exponentially in the past few years, with most growth seen in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. This means that our reach has become truly global, and that our writing needs to be clear, crisp, accessible and consistent to serve this international readership.

▼ Key needs by audience type



Why do we publish?

The OECD's publishing policy aims to increase our readership and maximise the impact, relevance and accessibility of OECD work on:

- major economic, environmental and social issues in the public policy debate
- key technical issues debated within and between governments
- OECD Council decisions and recommendations.

The policy states that all OECD published material should have a clear purpose and clearly defined target audiences, and should be of high editorial quality. It should provide:

- clear, concise, policy-oriented messages
- accurate, relevant and interesting subject matter
- timely research, data and analysis
- clear and accessible contents
- consistent structure and presentation.

The publishing policy is endorsed by Council and implemented by the OECD Public Affairs and Communications Directorate (PAC).

What do we publish?

The OECD publishes about 500 titles per year, as well as periodicals and online databases. These are available on OECD iLibrary, the OECD Bookshop and on a variety of external platforms. Key titles are published in both English and French, and have multilingual summaries in up to 25 languages. Country studies are often also published in the language of the country studied.

“Publication” refers to any report or database that:

- is included in the OECD publishing programme
- has been accepted for publication by the OECD Publications Board following editorial review
- has bibliographical referencing
- is distributed via OECD iLibrary and the OECD Bookshop.

Material released in any other way is not considered as a formal publication.

The OECD produces a wide range of publication types across a series of **categories** designed to reach different audiences and address varying needs:

Key titles:

- **At-a-Glance publications** present key indicators in a simple, reader-friendly format for a wide audience, from policy makers and researchers to students and journalists.
- **Outlooks and other annual or regular titles** provide an overview of recent developments for a wide range of audiences. They assess the current state of play based on OECD expertise in a variety of subjects. Outlook publications are forward-looking and include trends and forecasting.
- **One-off high-profile titles** present pioneering data and analysis in a particular subject field. These are generally written for a specialist readership, but include elements (editorials, summaries, overviews) accessible to a wide range of audiences, from policy makers to students and journalists.

These key titles are translated into French and often accompanied by multilingual summaries, highlights and multimedia products.

Other categories:

- **Thematic book series** group monographs around a single theme, such as skills, innovation or green growth.
- **Country-specific reviews** examine country policies in given thematic areas. The full publication, or the assessment and recommendations chapter, is often translated into the language of the country reviewed.

- **Specialised monographs and proceedings** present findings from a particular area in which the OECD works, often for expert readership.
- **Guidelines and reference publications** are often highly negotiated texts, with the potential to advance policy on a global scale.
- **Glossaries** provide definitions of key terms and are a valuable resource to readers.
- **Statistical publications** provide detailed tables. They cover a large variety of themes and generally interest an expert audience. OECD statistics are published in databases, book format (on line and print), and in thematic country-comparative tables formats available on line.
- **Journals** publish articles by OECD and guest authors, designed for expert readership.
- **Working papers** and **policy papers** are also important vehicles for disseminating research findings.

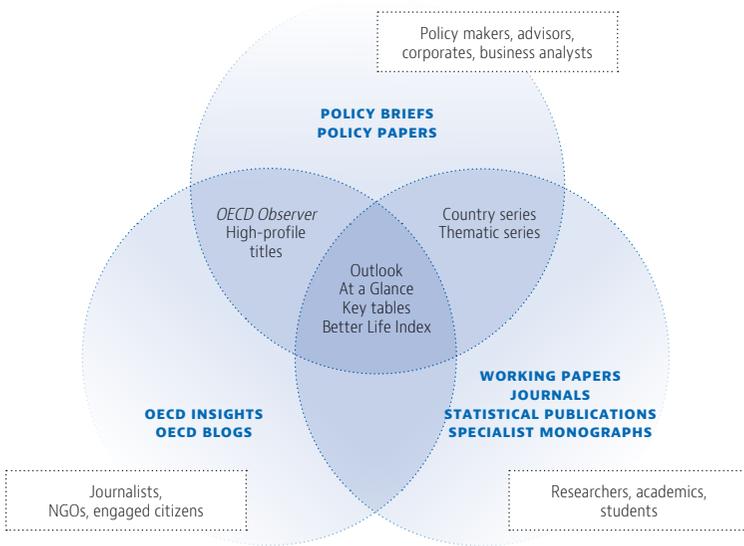
PAC also works with authors to produce corporate communications products, designed to reach a wide readership:

- The **OECD Factbook** is among the OECD's most-read publications.
- The **OECD Observer** magazine, written for a broad audience, is published four times a year and covers key issues, as well as OECD publications and events.
- **OECD Insights** comprise a series of reader-friendly books and a blog, using OECD analysis and data to explore some of today's most pressing social and economic issues for a broad audience, particularly journalists, students and interested non-specialists.
- The **OECD Better Life Index**, also aimed at a broad general audience, allows users to compare well-being across countries, in the areas of material living conditions and quality of life.

As our readership expands beyond our core audiences to include the corporate sector, students, civil society and the engaged public, it has become critical to adapt our published material to a growing set of needs and expectations, as well as to new technologies. Reader surveys show that all of our audiences expect content that is easy to understand: concise, and with clear, action-oriented messages.

See also: *Who are our readers?*, p. 10; *OECD standard publication structure*, pp. 24-27.

▼ Key OECD publications mapped to audience types



Busy readers want to go straight to the information they need. OECD titles are therefore available on the OECD iLibrary both in complete book form and “broken up” by chapter, article or indicator, with each component available independently. Figures and tables are also available as individual components, when StatLinks (a permanent electronic link [DOI] connecting to the item’s underlying Excel file) have been created during production.

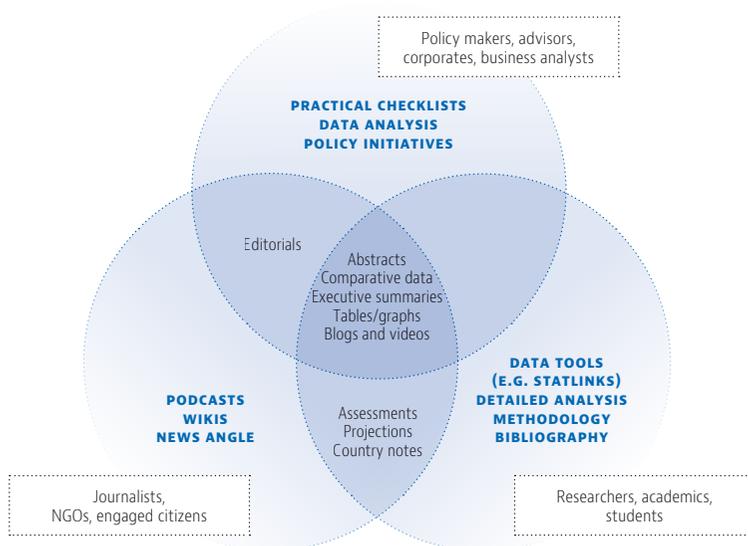
This approach multiplies the chances that readers will find information quickly and easily.

See also: *Figure and table presentation, p. 30.*

How do we publish?

The structure of publications, as well as the titles of chapters and other components, are all the more important when your work is published as a collection of components, rather than books that are read from start to finish.

▼ Key publication components mapped to audience types



To make our content easier to find, OECD publications should have:

- a clear, simple **table of contents**, with only two levels of headings (usually, parts and chapters, or chapters and indicators)
- **stand-alone components**, with well-prepared abstracts, endnotes and references for chapters, and self-contained figures and tables, with active links to further material
- clear and concise **titles** that contain meaningful keywords.

The same holds true for web content and communications materials that need to:

- have clear and logical navigation
- be stand alone, on a given webpage or in a brochure or article, but provide active links to related OECD material
- contain concise and clear titles to enhance online readability, with keywords to ensure discoverability.

See also: *How do people read?* pp. 16-17; *OECD standard publication structure*, pp. 24-27.

These elements not only help readers understand the content, they represent essential **descriptive information** or **metadata** that will be used by librarians, booksellers, abstracting and indexing services (e.g. EconLit), information providers (e.g. UnCover) and search engines like Google that serve OECD readers worldwide.

What are metadata?

Put simply, metadata are data about data. In the publishing context, metadata are the descriptive information attached to a specific item, meaning all the information that identifies a particular publication or component, including the elements that make up its bibliographic information:

- subject-specific keywords in titles and abstracts
- the marketing blurb (which appears on line and in promotional materials)
- the citation of the work (which appears on line and on the copyright page, and may also include volume and issue numbers, author or editor names, and co-publishers as appropriate)
- international bibliographic information such as an ISBN or ISSN (which appear on the back cover, on line and on the copyright page)
- the digital object identifier or DOI (which is attached to each component).

See also: Marketing blurb, p. 31; Bibliographical referencing: Sources and citations, pp. 57-64.

How do people read?

Readers respond well to short sentences. Most people find an average of more than 20 words per sentence hard to follow. Many read the headings and simply scan the text that comes underneath. In general, people remember information more effectively when it comes in small batches.

Short sentences are essential on line. A reader reads a print page by starting on the left and moving right. On screen however, the eyes jump first to the middle, then move left, and finally right. Studies have found that 80% of readers scan pages rather than read word for word. They pick out a few sentences or even parts of sentences to get the information they want, reading 75% of the text and ignoring much of the detail.

See also: Specifics on web writing, p. 33.

Clear signposting provides readers with information they can scan. The more your text provides readers with scannable information, in chunks and based on clear signposting, the more likely it will be read.

What makes a text scannable? A consistent style and different ways of setting out information into meaningful chunks that attract the eye. In short, this means:

- organised content
- crisp, clear titles and headings
- strategic use of boxes and well-formatted tables, figures and illustrations
- optimised use of bulleted and numbered lists
- consistent use of terminology, spelling and capitalisation
- spare but strategic use of italics and bold
- proper use of citations
- active links to related and background material.

See also: Signpost effectively, pp. 20-21.

The Corporate Communications Portal (CCP)

The Corporate Communications Portal (CCP) provides a one-stop-shop for news and information on communications, publishing and public affairs.

The CCP is an eShare portal where you will find an overview of the products and activities that PAC undertakes on behalf of the Organisation, as well as a calendar containing an overview of external communications planning. There is also a reference library of guidelines related to all aspects of communications and publishing.

This will improve the user experience and ensure that the right information can be found quickly and easily. The CCP includes:

- **Homepage** – a focus area to inform staff of key work, a calendar view of upcoming OECD major events and quick links which are based on frequently asked questions.
- **Guidelines** under the themes: Writing/Editing, Publishing, Public Affairs, Media and Branding. Each theme is split into categories: Process, Templates and Further Reading.
- **Communications Calendar** – showcases major OECD events and key publications launches, and external events.



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